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ABSTRACT

"Options in Education" is a radio news program which focuses on issues and developments in education. This transcript contains discussions of Jonathon Kozol's book "The Night Is Dark and I Am Far from Home," the voucher system in education, and California's early education plan and "Reform for Intermediate and Secondary Education" report. Participants in the program include John Merrow and Wendy Blair, moderators; Donald Bigelow; David Tyack; David Mandel and Robert Cunningham, of the National Institute of Education; Wilson Riles; and reporter David Ensor. (JM)

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 5, 1976

National Public Radio

Options in Education

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 181 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Producer is Midge Hart. The Associate Producer is Jo Ellyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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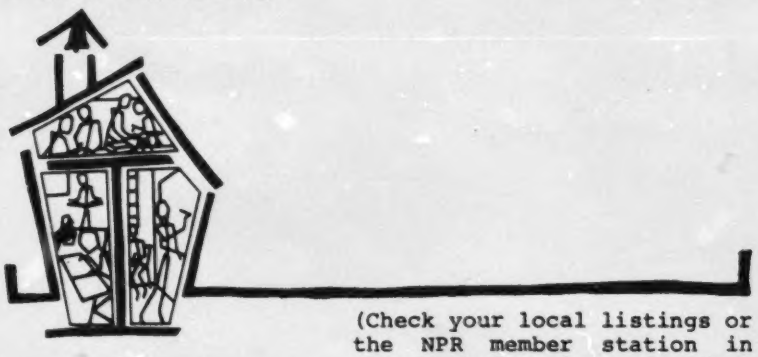

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(MUSIC)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues and developments in education - from the ABC's of primary education to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. On this edition of OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, "Reformers".

Our book reviewer takes author Jonathon Kozol to task.

"Charles Sumner wrote a letter to his brother, in which he said, 'I am too much reformer to be trusted.'"

BLAIR: A historian challenges the status quo.

"I believe maybe in going against the stream, if the stream is saying, 'Let's forget about educating the poor. We tried that in the Sixties and it didn't work.' And I say, 'We didn't try hard enough.'"

MERROW: And a politician takes a stand.

"Some believe that Black children and Chicano children have to sit next to white children in order to learn. And I not only disagree with that concept - I am insulted by it. Two thirds of the world is non-white and there are simply not enough whites to go around."

(MUSIC)

"In examining such a work as 'Peter Rabbit', it's important that the superficial characteristics of its deceptively simple plot should not be allowed to blind the reader to the more substantial fabric of its deeper motivations.

"In this report, I plan to discuss the sociological implications of family pressures so great as to drive an otherwise moral rabbit to perform acts of thievery which he consciously knew were against the law.

"I also hope to explore the personality of Mr. McGregor in his conflicting roles as farmer and humanitarian."

BLAIR: Book reports are a new feature on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. The reporter is Dr. Donald Bigelow, who learned his "ABC's" of education by teaching at Amherst, Brandeis, and Columbia. He's an historian, and has been at the U.S. Office of Education for over fifteen years, and has agreed to become a regular contributor as our Book Reviewer.

Bigelow describes himself as outspoken, and a man who believes that educators must transcend the barriers of their own academic specialty. He spoke with John Merrow about the latest work of school critic Jonathan Kozol, best known as author of "Death at an Early Age."

BIGELOW: Well, I'm so sad, and I'm so tired, for Jonathan Kozol that I'm not sure I can get through the period without weeping. He entitles his book - "The Night Is Dark & I Am Far From Home" - and he surely is.

I read the book very carefully, and I don't think he tells in the book where the line came from, but it's an old hymn from Cardinal Newman, but what he doesn't do is to keep the last two lines, which are even more important. They say - "Keep Thou my feet. I do not ask to see the distant scene. One step enough for me." Well, this is one tiny step backwards.

The simple fact is -- This is a humorless indictment of the schools as if there were no human beings anywhere - as if there were no good teachers ever - if there were no students in them - they are just places that are just too terrible to imagine. And the people who are in them are too terrible to imagine because of what's happening to them. I read - Public education for most children is a 12-year exercise of ethical emaciation. The needle is put in in kindergarten.

He's so upset about these awful schools that I, who have been complaining about schools for some time, began to think, "Well, it can't be that bad. There can't be anything like that which he describes." "Most great fiction," he says, "almost all important verse are written on one of three essential truths - love, death or pain. None of the three is ever consciously conveyed within the public school." Do you want more? I can turn almost anywhere.

"In the university, we hear much the same thing - though it is a different set of words." Jonathan here has written an autobiography. It is of his soul. It is, in fact, a document that says and begs - it beggars description, but it begs for reform. These schools are those prisons that Tom Wicker talked about when he described Attica - with much more of sense of Troy, but no less problem.

Jonathan, however, for all the sense that he has good people and bad people - Tolstoy is good, Thoreau is good, Ghandi is good - hah!, but Moynihan - wowie! - watch out -- not only that, but watch out there are other times and other places, he says, where a well-placed bomb is worth a thousand blueprints. Imagine that!

And if I look on page 89, I have something just as good -- "What is the truth?" he asks, as only he could. "This is the truth," he says, "500 kids refusing to take food or making up their minds that they would not obey the school attendance rules could shatter the patterns and shake up the mold of life in Salt Lake City, San Diego or Seattle for 100 years. 500 kids in Westport or Darien who stood up one day and announced that they would not go from a rich person's high school to expensive colleges in certainty that they were treading on the broken hopes and cheated dreams of poor kids every bit their human equals could overturn the college admissions pattern in one season."

Charles Sumner wrote a letter to his brother in which he said, "I am too much reformer to be trusted."

MERROW: And you think that applies to Jonathan Kozol?

BIGELOW: Yes.

MERROW: Thank you very much. Donald Bigelow, our book reviewer.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: The ideal of universal public education gave rise to our present system, which, in economic terms, is a monopoly. Compulsory attendance laws guarantee a clientele, and public tax dollars insure a financial base. If this monopoly delivers its product equally - that is, equal educational opportunity - then the system might be judged efficient and good. But many critics argue that the product is not delivered consistently or equitably. People with high incomes may exercise freedom of choice by choosing a non-public school or by moving to another part of town where schools are better. Those with low incomes have fewer options. The public school may be the only game in town.

On the assumption that a monopoly in education is harmful, conservatives and liberals alike are suggesting alternatives. One is the education voucher.

BLAIR: The idea of a "voucher" or "ticket" is easiest to understand by analogy. Assume that students have an entitlement or right to a certain number of years of schooling. Under the voucher plan, consumers could spend their tickets or vouchers at the school of their choice after shopping around at all schools - public, parochial and private. In other words, schools would compete in the marketplace.

While this sounds great in theory, there are problems in practice. The present system is huge and fragmented, and full of people who understandably have an interest in keeping things the way they are.

MERROW: The idea frightens many teachers and their unions. They view vouchers as a threat to their security and to the health of the public schools. They fear that given freedom of choice, people will desert troubled public schools en masse. Proponents of the plan argue that this exodus would be temporary; that if schools had to compete in an open system, the overall quality of even the most beleaguered inner-city school would be forced to improve.

Besides, supporters of vouchers point out -- People who can afford it are already pulling out of the public school, creating chaos in a system that seems to have no mechanism for regaining its equilibrium.

Aside from the opposition from within the educational establishment, vouchers face an apparent church/state hurdle. A true voucher system would allow consumers to cash in their educational ticket at church-supported schools. Some say this violates the constitutional prohibition against state-supported religions. Historian David Tyack, a voucher supporter from the Liberal camp, sees a way over the church-state hurdle.

DAVID TYACK: There's a curious thing here, John, which is -- There's been no church-state hurdle for government grants to students going to college. Somehow there's a magic line. The minute you leave the secondary school and become a college student, then you can take your GI Bill to a church related institution. I don't see the rationale. That seems very arbitrary to me - that a person can get Federal or state assistance to go to higher education, but not to an elementary or secondary school. It seems to me that you are not aiding the institution directly. When you give a voucher to a parent, a poverty family, that parent may choose to go to the public school - probably will; may choose to go to a parochial school; that's up to the parent. May choose to go to a non-sectarian, independent school. That's up to the parent. And, so, it seems to me that the voucher, in this case, is very much like the GI Bill. And, unless someone can convince me to the contrary, I don't see why there should be a church-state barrier.

MERROW: It's not you, though, they have to convince. It's the courts.

BIGELOW: Sure, that's right.

MERROW: Historian David Tyack of Stanford University. I spoke with him at a recent meeting of the National Association of Independent Schools in Boston. Conservative Economist Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago developed most of the economic arguments for a voucher system. Stated in its simplest terms, his argument is that education will improve if schools compete in an open marketplace.

But two educational researchers at the National Institute of Education feel that it's a very long way from Friedman's theory to practice. David Mandel and Robert Cunningham discuss their experience with the voucher plan in Alum Rock, California. David Mandel.

DAVID MANDEL: To use Friedman's analogy, well, what might happen is that schools might try to differentiate themselves - just like automobile dealers try to differentiate their products. And we'd try to appeal to various groups of parents who thought they might be interested in their school, or live nearby their school, and, therefore, capture a share of the market - again, using the economic terminology.

MERROW: It all sounds so neat. It sounds just terrific. Robert?

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'd like to get back to the free market analogy because there are a lot of us think it may not work quite in the free market sense - in that it won't be a free market. There will still be a very limited number of school systems who are offering the programs. And rather than suddenly raising this possibility of hucksterism, which is a frequent criticism of vouchers, what you would have would be mainly the normal school alternatives that have existed in local communities, but you would be opening up those alternatives to students who have never had them before; who have always been trapped in the public school system because they didn't have the funds to go to a private school.

So, rather than that marketing focus that Friedman or others might talk about - the grocery store environment - what we have really is simply a chance for students to have a more fluid set of alternatives.

DAVID MANDEL: The other presumed objective, I think, is also that schools wouldn't necessarily have to differentiate themselves in terms of their curriculum, in terms of what their offerings were, but by virtue of students having a voucher that schools would tend to be more responsive than they have been to parents in the past. And I think that is largely what motivated people at the Office of Economic Opportunity where the Alum Rock Program started to look toward vouchers; where their clientele were low income parents and low income students and they generally felt that disadvantaged people had much less of a voice in their schools - be it a system with any kind of open-enrollment or alternatives or the sort of standard system that we know today.

MERROW: Fear of hucksterism and the possibility that vouchers will lead to segregated schools lead even staunch free market advocates like Milton Friedman to accept the necessity of some government licensing and regulation.

The Alum Rock, California experiment began in 1972 with 4,000 students in six schools. Today, 14 schools with 9,000 students are participating. But it's not a true voucher system because only public schools are involved. And most families in Alum Rock given a choice simply send their children to the neighborhood school.

There have been some setbacks as well. The National Institute of Education's plan for voucher experiments in Connecticut and New Hampshire has been dashed - because local voters turned the opportunity down flat. Does that mean that the $800,000 already invested in voucher research has been wasted? Robert Cunningham comments.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Well, I don't think so at all. East Hartford is a good case in point. East Hartford divided the voucher concept rather than going to the voters and the school board with a large package that was called "Vouchers". The Superintendent of Schools in East Hartford, Eugene Diggs, decided, "Now, listen. Some people are opposed to vouchers for a variety of reasons. So, rather than having everyone vote down vouchers because of the one reason they have, which seems to be the dominant one, let's divide vouchers into five components. Basically, they were "open enrollment", the first component which is that students can go to any school in East Hartford if there is space available; #2, free transportation within the boundaries of the voucher project; #3, decentralization, which basically meant that a lot of the decisions which were made by Superintendent Diggs would divert to each of the school principals; #4 is public information, and #5 would be parochial school participation.

Now, the reason for this litany is that although vouchers were voted down, several of the components are, in fact, being picked up. East Hartford did move ahead last fall with somewhat of an open enrollment policy, and expanded that program this fall with a very good brochure to parents which described the available schools in East Hartford to include, as well, the Catholic schools. So, the Superintendent has already moved ahead with an open enrollment policy which is very aggressive.

MERROW: But, by almost any standard, the East Hartford approach is slow and expensive. We're a long way from Horace Mann's dream of "effective, comprehensive public schools". David Tyack believes the dream can become real in some places, but perhaps not in all.

MERROW: Now, you talk about Horace Mann's dream of an "effective, comprehensive public school". How are we doing on achieving that dream?

DAVID TYACK: Well, I think we can achieve that dream in relatively small communities where all the children can go to the same elementary schools and the same high schools. I think in the very large cities that are segregated by race and social class we are not doing that. They're not comprehensive. They don't include all different kinds of children under the same roof. They don't teach children the basic skills that they need to survive in this society. And I think what we need to do is to think about new ways to reach the kind of goals that Horace Mann talked about.

I guess I believe maybe in going against the stream, if the stream, at a given time, is saying, "Let's forget about educating the poor. We tried that in the Sixties, and it didn't work." I say, "We didn't try hard enough. We didn't try the right things. Let's keep experimenting."

MERROW: "Let's keep experimenting," Tyack urges, but voters in six New Hampshire towns and in East Hartford, Connecticut turned down the chance to spend Federal funds on a voucher experiment. There are no other voucher plans on the horizon. But, on the other hand, there is more talk about alternatives within the public schools these days, and perhaps the thought of vouchers may be stimulating the public schools into action. How, if at all, have the taxpayers benefited from the abortive experiment with educational vouchers? Here's Robert Cunningham of the National Institute of Education.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think that's a very hard one to answer. To be really frank about it, it seems to me that the Federal government can't be in a position of always continually funding business as usual; that if we're going to get any place in education or any other set of institutional services, then we have to be able to take a few risks. And if the government ceases taking risks in important ways for important public policy changes, then we haven't gotten anyplace.

MERROW: What happened to vouchers? I mean, are vouchers an idea whose time has passed, or whose time has not yet come? David?

DAVID MANDEL: Well, it's hard to say if it passed or not. I don't know if that matters much. It seems that there are a number of people around the country who for various reasons have been interested in vouchers, and it seems to me that those reasons have been fairly legitimate. At the same time, it seems that for the most part, most people are not prepared to see the kind of substantial change in the way the schools are funded and organized that vouchers would bring about.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Neither of us really want to say that vouchers are dead. What I would rather say is that we do have already existing voucher systems in a variety of other related areas - the GI Bill being an example that people frequently cite. The GI Bill does work. And everyone says it works for reasons that are very different from elementary and secondary education reasons - that, essentially, people who have reached the age of reason are able to make their own choices.

We also have a similar system with tax deductions for child care. In effect, that becomes a voucher of sorts to every taxpayer in America who can take a tax deduction.

MERROW: Are you implying that we somehow are sneaking up on a voucher system in the public schools?

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Yes. That's one way to look at it. I'd rather not think of it in such surreptitious terms. What we've done, unfortunately, is developed a series of mechanisms that work for other groups - both for pre-school care and the GI Bill for adults. And what we've unfortunately done is take the middle group - the group in elementary and secondary education - and by attaching a label - "vouchers" - and then by ballyhooing vouchers as a panacea for all the nation's ills, really oversold the concept that may be useful in some small communities and in some parts of the nation.

MERROW: As it stands right now, then, for the foreseeable future, the only people who will have choice in the schools are the ones who either can afford to move physically, bodily, the whole family - or people who have enough money to send their kids away to non-public schools.

DAVID MANDEL: Well, that's a little strong because there are open enrollment and alternative programs in many places around the nation that do offer choice - but offer choice without the financial mechanism that is associated with vouchers.

MERROW: These alternatives that you're talking about - are they in any way a response to the public schools - to how they perceive vouchers - that is, as a real threat? So they say to themselves, "Oh-oh. We'd better shape up and start offering some choice on our own"?

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Well, there may be some of that, but I think that the "alternative school movement" is something that's been building steam, and going on, for a fair number of years now. And to say that it's in response to the tnreat of vouchers - which, to me, doesn't seem very real - since there aren't many people storming this office to do vouchers, that would be taking it a bit far.

DAVID MANDEL: One of the other interesting features that we haven't mentioned about this "alternative schools movement" is that it's probably initiated primarily by teaching groups themselves. The teachers in Alum Rock, for example, were very interested in being able to match their own teaching styles with new programs. So, then, we, as a group of teachers, interested in progressive education or open schools, or traditional class arrangements, can group with other teachers of the same interest, and we'd all be more effective.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: Is is the case that we are overwhelmed with people who want to do dissertations on vouchers. So, it remains a subject of major academic interest. (laughter) But in terms of people who are responsible for the public schools in this country, their interest is marginal at best.

MERROW: Thanks very much. David Mandel & Robert Cunningham of the National Institute of Education.

BLAIR: NIE's three-part experiment in educational vouchers has been reduced to a single partial voucher plan in one California city. Educational vouchers, an idea which attracts strong support from liberals and conservatives alike seems to be dead for the present and foreseeable future.

(MUSIC)

Last week, we went to California for a discussion of the financial problems of higher education. This week, California comes to Washington in the person of Dr. Wilson Riles, California's Superintendent of Public Instruction.

California spends more money than any other state on public education, and Wilson Riles is the man who oversees that enormous $6 billion budget. Riles won acclaim in his state for restoring harmony to the educational establishment after the turbulent years of his predecessor, ultra-conservative Max Rafferty. The comparison with Rafferty serves Riles well. He's now in his second term, winning re-election in 1974 with a whopping 68% of the vote.

The Los Angeles Times called Riles "outspoken" and quotes a supporter of Riles as saying, "He is an attractive, warm human being with Lincolnesque qualities." The Times called Riles "his own best press agent - powerfully persuasive in face-to-face contact without seeming to be a self-promoter."

Riles engineered the state's early childhood education plan three years ago, and went on record saying that "this program is the one on which he stakes his career as an educator." The early childhood education plan - or ECE - is prospering despite cutbacks in many social programs under California's Governor Jerry Brown. Riles describes the program to John Merrow.

WILSON RILES: We did set up a program to reform kindergarten through three, and to make assurances in that reform that by the time a student finished the third grade, that student would, indeed, have mastered the basic skills - to read, to write, and, hopefully, be excited about learning.

I think perhaps the greatest breakthrough is that we require that parents be involved in the planning of individualized programs for the children. We know that children are individuals, but often in the past we've crammed them through our pigeonholes and expected all of them to grow and develop at the same rate - and, of course, they don't. We individualize.

MERROW: It says in the literature that your goal is to get the adult/child ratio down to one-to-nine, or one-to-ten. Have you been successful?

WILSON RILES: We've accomplished that, and we've accomplished it through the technique of allowing the school to decide whether they want to - say, in a class of thirty - whether they want to have two additional teachers, or whether they will hire two additional aides. whether they will use parent volunteers. Now, it's too expensive to get that ratio down with the use of teachers - so, most schools use a combination of aides (for which there is money to pay for), or parent-volunteers.

Last year we had 181,000 parents volunteering systematically in the schools of the state. And I would say on this point - Even if we had all the money in the world, I think getting parents involved at the school site would be something that we ought to do anyhow.

MERROW: Do you have in mind some ultimate change in the way schools are governed? I mean, having parents much more involved in the school, having the community much more involved in the way schools are run -- instead of leaving them in the hands of professionals?

WILSON RILES: I think it's essential, and that was one of our greatest breakthroughs in getting this done because, you know, I've been a teacher, and I know that teachers ought to be let alone. They close the door. That's their domain. And they get a little nervous about anyone coming into the picture. We've overcome that. And, I should say, on the other end of the scale, parents were very reluctant at first. But then we decided that we would phase this in. We would begin with a certain number of schools in each district - and, in this case, it turned out to be about 12% in the first year. The next year we went to 22%. This year we had 33%. And the Governor has agreed to put in his budget enough resources - that is $35 million additional - so that 52% of the children in K-3 will be involved.

MERROW: In other words, the schools or the school district are competing to get this extra ECE money, is that correct?

WILSON RILES: That is correct. We provide, first, that at the school site a plan must be developed which identifies the needs of each youngster in that school. Then, an implementation strategy laid out and a way of evaluating. And parents must be involved in that. When it is improved there is $140 extra per student to carry out those plans. Now, if those plans are, indeed, carried out - and we monitor this very carefully - then the district can expand on the next go-round to additional schools. If the plans are not carried out, then they cannot expand. You see, the pressure then is kind of a peer pressure in which success is rewarded and failure, of course, is penalized. And I find that it works.

Some of the other programs - the Federal programs - indeed, reward failure. For example, we found in Title I over the years that if the youngsters are not doing well - and they're from low income families - you get extra money. But the moment they start doing well, they become ineligible for funds. Well, now, I found that this is the

wrong way to approach it. You make it attractive for people to fail. And in ECE, we make it attractive to succeed.

MERROW: You bring up Title I - here in Washington, there's some concern that Wilson Riles and Title I don't necessarily jive when they come to their goals.

The notion in Title I, I guess, is the money should follow the child. Some people say that in Wilson Riles' plan the notion is that the money should stay in the classroom and be used to improve the teacher, and then the kids will benefit. Is that a reasonable distinction between the two?

WILSON RILES: I think perhaps it's not drawn that sharply. I believe in the intent of Title I -- #1, that youngsters tend to do less well when they come from low income families, and, #2, we should do something extra for those youngsters, and we do. But then when you start trying to break this down in a way where you have, say, 25 youngsters in the classroom, and then you have, say, 10 of them are poor children, and then you try to provide specific services within that classroom setting - without any of the other children benefiting, I mean it's falacious. I mean, it just doesn't happen that way.

MERROW: But that is the way Title I is constructed.

WILSON RILES: Yes, that's the way it was drawn up - at least that's the way the regulations are being interpreted. What I say is - You determine what the individual needs of each child in that class is. And, if that child is not making it, and is from a low income family, you devise a program to meet the individual needs of that youngster. And I don't care whether the youngster's bright, dull, or what - but let's treat everyone as an individual, and let's use the resources in order to accomplish that - rather than on some kind of predetermined ratio that simply does not work.

MERROW: But you'd like to see ECE money used for all kids in California from K through 3.

WILSON RILES: And we do. And the way we accomplish that in schools where you have disadvantaged youngsters is to require that each school show, #1, what the problems are with the youngsters and their assets, and devise an individual program, and, also, whatever the funding sources, these are shown in the plans and how they're used. This makes sense to us.

I will also make one other suggestion that we found that is important: For a long time, youngsters who did not fit into some kind of predetermined category were left out. And, indeed, many border line situations where people - let's say lower middle class and middle class parents - felt that their youngsters were getting no consideration. With the ECE, we've done away with that. In other words, I say every child should progress to the maximum of his ability.

Politically, we've gotten great support - because you can't expect people who pay the bills to very long tolerate a situation where their youngster is getting no assistance whatsoever. They don't mind helping those in need - but we had to set up a program that would help all youngsters, and I based my entire administration on whether the youngsters - white, Black, Brown, bi-lingual or non-bi-lingual, let's educate that youngster to the maximum of the youngster's ability.

MERROW: Is ECE working? Is it a success?

WILSON RILES: Yes, even far more than I anticipated after a three year program. The youngsters are succeeding. We can document this by test scores. We are very pleased with the program and I'm glad that our Governor is pleased, too. He's not a free spender, as you may have heard, and to convince him to invest $35 million additional to this program was certainly an endorsement.

ECE is a process which provides that the school set up plans, as I've indicated, for each individual child. And, then, devise programs to meet those plans, and, of course, evaluate the degree to which they've succeeded. Now, I think the process is a good process, and, indeed, if we find that children are not doing any better in those, then, of course, you use the same process to try something differently. And that's what ECE is all about. It provides a framework at the school site level to improve the education of youngsters.

It is not a formula by which you say - "You teach reading this way, and you can expect this kind of result." We spend $6 billion per year in the schools of California - elementary and secondary schools. People are unhappy with the results. We've taken a small portion of this. As a matter of fact, if we implement our RISE legislation, and when ECE is fully funded, we're only talking about 7% of the total amount we spend.

Well, I hold to revitalize the program with 7% of the funds - to indeed see that that $6 billion is better spent - is the way to go. And I have no doubt that with this kind of input, the difference that is showing now will be maintained.

The other answer is to say you do nothing, and that would be unacceptable to me.

BLAIR: Wilson Riles, California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, describing that state's early childhood education program. There's a storm cloud on the horizon, however. The ECE Program and Title I of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act conflict over the targeting of funds. By law, Title I money must be spent on disadvantaged children.

HEW auditors say they cannot find evidence that all of California's Title I has been spent on disadvantaged children. $3 million of Federal money is at issue. Most recently, HEW audited California's use of Title I funds for administration of the programs, and now HEW wants California to explain how it spent over $600,000 last year. According to the U.S. Office of Education, the auditors say they cannot trace the Federal dollars.

MERROW: Just how serious this situation is depends on whom you talk to. The Office of Education personnel who work most closely with California are alarmed. For example, Gus Cheatham, who directly oversees California's use of Title I money, told us, "It's a very serious situation. I know they have used Title I money as general aid. California doesn't have safeguards to see that the money is spent according to statute." And Maurice Clifford of OE's Title I Audit Review Office told us, "The history of California Title I is one of problems and substantial difficulties, but relatively little change. It has come to the point of too many promises. Their program is totally out of line with Title I regulations." HEW's auditors have recommended that California get no more money for the administration of Title I until the present situation is cleared up.

On the other hand, California's Assistant State Superintendent Don Wilson downplayed the story. "Every state has problems with OE over Title I, and virtually nobody ever pays back any money." White said. When we asked #2 man in OE, Duane Mattheis, about the concerns expressed by those administering and auditing California's use of Title I funds, Mr. Mattheis took a position in the middle. "We need to be able to trace Federal dollars, but we don't want California to have to set up an unwieldy organizational structure just to do that," he said.

Mattheis admitted that money rarely is paid back to the Office of Education, and he called the California situation "an everyday occurrence. It's not the biggest and not the worst." In fact, OE is in the process of trying to get Philadelphia to refund its entire Title I appropriation for Fiscal 1973 - $25 million.

BLAIR: Riles' early childhood education program pumps new money into schools. Now, Riles is pushing hard for reform of intermediate and secondary education - that is, the RISE Report.

The RISE plan for the upper grades seeks to accomplish many of the same goals as the ECE program. He talked about RISE with John Merrow and NPR Reporter David Ensor.

ENSOR: Let me go into some of the details & recommendations of the RISE report. I understand you've endorsed the report. Am I right?

WILSON RILES: Yes, and we have just recently introduced legislation.

ENSOR: Well, let me look at some of the things that are in that. Seat time is out as a way of measuring when a person has completed their high school education, and the state is supposed to set a minimum level of proficiency in reading, writing and computation for graduation. Would that be an easier version of the fairly tough test you now give to high schoolers who want to leave before graduation age? Would it have to include things like filling out an income tax form, or that sort of basic skill? What form would it take?

WILSON RILES: It would include both. As a matter of fact, we are providing in the legislation that absolutely at the high school level, for graduation, there must be minimum proficiencies that are met. And I would certainly advocate that these would include not only the academic skills, but also what we call functional, survival skills that every citizen must be able to master if they're going to function like citizens in our society.

ENSOR: Professional educators always want to know when someone talks about functional literacy how it's going to be tested. What would you have - a written test, a combination of types of tests? Have you got down to it that specifically yet?

WILSON RILES: I would hope that we would have more than one way to determine it. And I realize that many of my colleagues get very nervous about this kind of thing, but if we're going to get the kind of support that we need for education, it's time to fish or cut bait. And, in California at least, people are ready for it. And this is the way we are going.

If a youngster completes the requirements that have been set before him, and completes them at 16, 17 or 15, then we should not require them to put in "seat" hours until they finish four years of high school.

ENSOR: So, when you mentioned age, are you talking about the proficiency test that will make it possible to finish high school earlier? The proficiency test, as I understand it, is a pretty tough test.

WILSON RILES: Yes.

ENSOR: It's tougher than what some people have to do to finish high school in California.

WILSON RILES: That's correct. For example, once the requirements are established for high school graduation - that is, for all the youngsters - leaving the proficiency test aside - then, the youngsters will be able to demonstrate whether they can meet those requirements and those requirements will be divorced entirely from the age of the student.

ENSOR: And one of the things the RISE program wants to do is get high school students into businesses as interns or trainees. How will you convince businesses that it's in their interest to take on high school interns?

WILSON RILES: I work very closely with a group in California called "The Industry Education Council", and some of the top industrial leaders - as well as labor leaders - are involved. And I can tell you that they are more enthusiastic with the intent of RISE than the school people. I hate to say that. In other words, they are ready. And to be specific, the President of the Board of Bank of America at a recent meeting I attended told me, "Wilson, I'm convinced that this is the way to go, and that if you need me to personally come to Sacramento and lobby for this bill, I will do it." And I met with Security National Bank and their President, and they're already opening their installations, and they said - "Just let us know when you're ready. We have 63 branches throughout California, and we'd be delighted to take a high school intern."

ENSOR: But apart from possibly getting two or three good people to hire, one of the things the RISE report mentions is financial incentives and maybe tax breaks to businesses that are willing to cooperate.

WILSON RILES: We hope that we can get that through, and I hope President Ford - whatever Presidents we have in the future - will lend the weight of their policies toward this.

ENSOR: But, as far as RISE is concerned, the business community in some ways is more raring to go than the education community. I mean, many educators regard every move to "vocationalize" any part of education, or train people for a job in high school, as a sort of threat to the kind of liberal education they feel every well rounded person should have.

WILSON RILES: What I've said and what we're trying to accomplish in RISE is very simple. Whether a youngster is going to college or not, I believe that youngster should have some kind of entry level skill before they finish high school. Now, this takes the onus off of trying to divide those who can't make it academically, and say - "You go to shop" - and those who can make it academically - "You go to college prep." I say it's good for every student to be able to know how to do something useful in this society, and so far as I'm concerned, this is just as important as reading Shakespeare.

MERROW: Dr. Riles, the RISE report calling for a comprehensive reform of the schools had some interesting - and, perhaps, controversial - recommendations about teachers. It says, "The existing process granting permanent status to public educators should be improved to provide as much assurance for the rights and welfare of the community and learners as is provided for the educators." It seems to me that

it's pretty easy to say that what you're calling for is an end to tenure, as we know it. Is that accurate?

WILSON RILES: Well, the Commission toyed with that idea, and then backed away from it. Keep in mind that I did not attempt to direct the Commission, but they did toy around with that quite a bit.

MERROW: All of a sudden, you're saying "they". Before you were saying "we".

WILSON RILES: This was before they gave the report to me. And they've given the report to me now, and we're trying to implement it. And it is ours. I can give you my personal feeling about tenure. There is a widespread belief that tenure is the reason why that we have some incompetent teachers. We have some incompetent teachers. And my view is they're in the small minority, but that is not the cause. Tenure is just not the cause of it.

You see, I'm old enough to remember when we did not have tenure, and I know some of the abuses at that level. And some of the arbitrary decisions. The only problem with tenure is that administrators do not exercise their prerogatives, and fire teachers who are incompetent.

Tenure does not protect incompetence. It sets up a due process provision, and I'd like to see those due processes retained. If a teacher is incompetent, then the administrator must prove the teacher is incompetent. And if you get rid of tenure, then you're saying you can fire a person at will, and I'm not willing to go back to that.

MERROW: It's a question then of on whom is the onus to look at the competence of a teacher. As it stand now, with tenure you have to have charges of incompetence brought. Now, in the Riles Report, apparently you're calling for a periodic review for licensing.

WILSON RILES: Absolutely.

MERROW: How often would a teacher's competence be reviewed - and by whom?

WILSON RILES: We require, for example, in ECE that there be in-service training. I would require it in RISE, and that in-service training would be tied to the job that is being done. And when you involve parents and other teachers in the process, and administrators, it becomes very clear to anyone if that person is not delivering. When you get to the point where you're making charges to prove whether a person is incompetent, it's really very late in the game. I think - to use Harry Truman's thing - I think the whole tenure thing is a red herring. I think what we need to do - those of us who are administrators who are responsible for those programs - we should have enough backbone to deal with this problem openly and without subterfuge - just passing papers around, or waiting at the end of the line - when it's obvious that a person can't make it, and then trying to fire them.

MERROW: But it might take a lot of backbone though, because they're dealing with increasingly strong teacher unions in California and across the country.

WILSON RILES: Yes, because unions have a stake in this, and I think teacher unions have to do what ought to be done in this case. It weakens their case if they have a lot of incompetence around. I'm speaking idealistically now, and maybe I'm on the wrong track, but I still believe it. How many times have you seen a lawyer disbarred by the Bar Association? How many doctors are kicked out because

they're incompetent? The fact of the matter is these organizations tend to be protective organizations. I hope the teachers can become responsible for their own teachers, and help in the screening of getting good people into the profession.

MERROW: Do you expect any kind of backlash against the teacher unions, which are, in fact, growing in strength and electing their own people to school boards around the country?

WILSON RILES: It will depend upon the statesmanship and reasonableness of teachers. And their beginning to center on what the needs of youngsters are. I believe that if we put the student foremost, and I think in RISE we use the word "think of the student as the client", then, the support of the teacher, and the welfare of the teacher naturally will follow. I think if teachers push their position too strongly without regard to the student, you will get a backlash that will really undo the gains that have been made in the past. There's no doubt about it.

ENSOR: Dr. Riles, I talked to some California reporters and I asked them what tough questions I could ask Dr. Riles. I've got a couple of them for you. One is on the subject of integration. They say you're hard to pin down on it, basically. They say that there's an undercurrent of feeling in California that you're not taking a leadership role in the effort to integrate those parts of the California schools that are not integrated to the extent that the Supreme Court would want them to be. How would you respond to that?

WILSON RILES: My position has been - at least I thought it was clear to everyone because it's clear to me - #1, I believe that [illegible] so far as it's reasonably feasible, and I mean that just as I've said it, that the schools ought to be racially and ethnically integrated. Now, where I differ with some of my advocates of integration is that some believe that Black children and Chicano children have to sit next to white children in order to learn. And I not only disagree with that concept, I am insulted by it.

Furthermore, if it had to be necessary for a non-white to sit with the white to learn, we'd be in bad shape because two-thirds of the world is non-white and there's simply not enough whites to go around. Finally, I would say that we've been at this thing since 1954, and a lot of youngsters have gone down the drain while these adults have argued about integrating and busing schools. I feel that my role is to center on quality education for every student wherever they happen to be. That's the role I can play. And I think it's about time these other institutions - Give a man a job, an opportunity to work, and an opportunity to buy his home where he wishes, and they'll take care of the integration, and I don't think the schools can solve every social problem.

ENSOR: You don't sound like you're thrilled about school busing.

WILSON RILES: Well, within reason. Let's take one of our cities. Let's take San Francisco. It is being accomplished because San Francisco is a reasonably small, self-contained city. But, now, let's take Los Angeles which spreads out all over the place. You have 300,000 people - primarily Black - in South Central L.A. Are you going to transport them out to the Valley, and then transport others back? I mean, that's nonsense. What I would like to do - and will do - is to come up with some alternatives whereby we can give these youngsters these integrated experiences that I think are educationally sound, but not think that we have to accomplish this by busing them everyday on some predetermined racial formula.

Let me give you an example of what I mean that's feasible? We have what we called "Regional Occupational Centers" all over California. These are places where you can teach youngsters with equipment that would be too expensive to have in every high school. Youngsters go to those Regional Occupational Centers to learn a skill. They automatically become integrated. But they don't go there for integration purposes. They go there in order to learn, and it's arranged so that integration is accomplished. I think these are some of the kinds of things that we can do that will redound to the benefit of children.

MERROW: The $145 extra per kid in ECE is matched in the RISE report. You suggest there an extra $100 per child at the junior high school level, and an extra $65 on a high school level child. This leads one to infer that you're restructuring the way Californians pay for their schools. Now, back here we hear California school finance is in turmoil, and that this might be a way out. Is that one of your agendas?

WILSON RILES: Well, we have a basic problem. Let me explain that. We had the Sorrento versus Priest decision, and the Supreme Court is expected this Spring or early Summer to hand down its final order. From what the court has said thus far we expect this order to be that money shall not determine the quality of a child's education - meaning that throughout the state we have various amounts - the tax base varies - and that means that some districts have more money than they need for schools, and others have too little. That is in the process of being solved. And I can't handle that. This would have to be a legislative mandate.

But the second part of this is we must have additional money for special needs - i.e., handicapped youngsters, disadvantaged youngsters, which is appropriate under the Supreme Court mandate thus far. And, #3, there must be some mechanism by which we make the system work better - reform dollars. So, it's a three-tiered system that we're working at. We're well along at two of the tiers, but this business of providing an equal finance base is something that will have to come along later. And I would guess that most states in the Union will have to face up to this as time goes along.

In Beverly Hills, for example, with $2.30 per $100 assessed valuation, they can raise $1500-$2000. We have a district in the same county, called Baldwin County, whose tax rate is twice that of Beverly Hills, and they can only raise a third of the money. So, you see, equal effort is not the criteria for equality of opportunity, and we have to bite the bullet and straighten out that base.

ENSOR: So, do I take you to be saying that you favor eventually, at least, switching from education being primarily financed on a local property tax basis to some sort of tax that goes into the state and is distributed fairly among the districts?

WILSON RILES: Yes. Some kind of mechanism to assure equal opportunity for all the children in this state. Now, how this can be worked out? I don't know. We have some proposals, but it is going to be a political decision that's going to have to be made.

BLAIR: Dr. Wilson Riles, California's popularly elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, talking in Washington with John Merrow and NPR Reporter David Ensor.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: It was Will Rogers who said that "the schools aren't what they used to be, and they never were."

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